



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

A COMPARISON OF THE EFFECTS OF PEN-AND-PAPER AND E-MAIL DIALOGUE JOURNAL WRITING ON WRITING PERFORMANCE AND ANXIETY AMONG TESL UNDERGRADUATES

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By

MARYAM FOROUTAN

**Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia
in the Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Degree of
Master of Science**

April 2009

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace,
I dedicate this work to my loving and dear parents

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment
of the requirement of the degree of Master of Science

**A COMPARISON OF THE EFFECTS OF PEN-AND-PAPER AND E-MAIL
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April 2009

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The purpose of this study was to compare the influence of two methods in writing dialogue journals, pen-and-paper as conventional tools, in contrast to e-mail as online tool, on writing performance in terms of content, language, vocabulary, language use and organization as well as writing anxiety. Measurement of writing performance was based on the ESL Composition Profile developed by Jacobs, Zinkgraf, Wormuth, Hartifel and Hughey (1981) and writing anxiety was measured by using the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) from Cheng (2004).

Forty two ESL students in their third semester took a course called “Computer Applications in TESL” participated in the study. Based on their expository writing

grades obtained in the previous semester as well as race and gender; they were randomly assigned into two groups 1) e-mail dialogue journal writing and, 2) pen-and-paper dialogue journal writing. For the first session to obtain pre-test writing, all students were given topics to write and had to complete a pre-test writing anxiety questionnaire. Both groups received two different treatments. Participants in the e-mail dialogue journal group were asked to write dialogue journals to their secret pals by using e-mail while the participants in the pen-and-paper dialogue journal group, wrote their dialogues via pen and paper. Both groups kept corresponding dialogue journals in the class for a seven-week period. After going through seven weeks, post tests were conducted.

All data were analyzed using SPSS to answer the hypotheses in the research. Independent-sample t-test and paired-sample t-test were utilized to compare two groups in terms of writing performance and writing anxiety. Results of the data analysis when two groups were compared showed that there is a significant difference between groups in terms of the overall writing performance and language use. However, the results for other components of writing performance; content, organization, vocabulary and mechanics as well as writing anxiety did not show statistically any significant difference between groups. The results for each group when pre and posttest overall writing performance were compared showed that there is a significant difference between groups i.e. participants in both groups have improved their writing performance due to using dialogue journals. Meanwhile, in terms of writing anxiety, paired sample t-test result showed there is no significant difference between pre and posttest writing anxiety for both groups.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

**PERBANDINGAN KEBERKESANAN PEN DAN KERTAS DAN
PENULISAN JURNAL E-MEL BERDIALOG KE ATAS PRESTASI
PENULISAN DAN KERAGUAN DI KALANGAN PRA-SISWAZAH TESL**

Oleh

MARYAM FOROUTAN

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Objektif kajian adalah untuk membandingkan pengaruh dua alat yang berbeza iaitu pen dan kertas sebagai alat tradisional;berbanding dengan e-mel sebagai alat ‘on-line’ dalam penulisan dialog jurnal ke atas pencapaian penulisan yang meliputi bahasa, perbendaharaan kata, penggunaan bahasa dan pengurusan penulisan dalam kerisauan. Pengukuran pencapaian penulisan adalah berdasarkan kepada “ESL Composition Profile” yang dibangunkan oleh Jacobs, Zinkgraf, Wormuth, Hartifel dan Hughey (1981) dan pengujian bagi penulisan kerisauan diukur dengan menggunakan “Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory” (SLWAI) daripada Cheng (2004).

Kajian ini melibatkan empat puluh dua orang pelajar ESL, semester ketiga yang telah mengambil subjek teras yang dikenali sebagai “Aplikasi Komputer dalam

TESL”. Empat puluh dua pelajar ini dibahagikan kepada dua kumpulan iaitu penulisan dialog jurnal melalui e-mel dan penulisan dialog jurnal menggunakan pen dan kertas. Berdasarkan gred yang diperolehi di dalam Expository Writing semester sebelumnya berserta bangsa dan jantina, responden telah diklasifikasikan kepada dua kumpulan. Sesi pertama, diperolehi melalui pra ujian penulisan. Pelajar diberi tajuk untuk penulisan dan soal selidik pra ujian penulisan kerisauan turut diedarkan. Kedua-dua kumpulan menerima rawatan yang berbeza. Kumpulan penulisan jurnal dialog menggunakan e-mel diminta menulis jurnal dialog kenalan rahsia menggunakan e-mel sementara kumpulan penulisan jurnal dialog menggunakan pen dan kertas menulis dialog menggunakan pen dan kertas. Kedua-dua kumpulan ini melakukan penulisan jurnal dialog dalam jangka masa tujuh minggu.

SPSS telah digunakan dalam analisis data untuk menjawab hipotesis kajian. Ujian-t bebas dan Ujian-t berpasangan digunakan untuk membandingkan kedua-dua kumpulan. Keputusan daripada analisis data menunjukkan tidak terdapat perbezaan di antara kedua-dua kumpulan dalam kesemua pencapaian penulisan dan penggunaan bahasa. Walau bagaimanapun, keputusan bagi komponen lain dalam pencapaian penulisan iaitu kandungan, pengurusan, perbendaharaan kata dan mekanisme penulisan kerisauan tidak menunjukkan statistik perbezaan yang signifikan antara kedua-dua kumpulan.

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APPROVAL

I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on (24th of April, 2009) to conduct the final examination of (Maryam Foroutan) on her thesis entitled " A comparison of the effects of Pen-and-Paper and E-Mail Dialogue Journal Writing On Writing Performance and Anxiety Among TESL Undergraduates " in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the (Master of Science).

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently, submitted for any other degrees at Universiti Putra Malaysia or at any other institution.

Maryam Foroutan

Date: 21.May.2009

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ESL	English as a Second Language
E-mail	Electronic mail
CMC	Computer Mediated Communication
UPM	Universiti Putra Malaysia
MOE	Ministry Of Education
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

One of the primary objectives of education is to teach students how to convey their thoughts through written words efficiently (Lam and Pennington, 1993). The ability to state an opinion, perception and information in written form is a required skill to achieve academic success especially for ESL students who are expected to write and interpret written English. It is also important for them to write well, particularly when they write theses or project papers.

ESL writing can be an arduous, time-consuming and frustrating task for an inexperienced writer. Some students feel anxious and disappointed in writing, thus this feeling of being frustrated in writing causes obstacles in their prospective accomplishment. As educators it is crucial to search for creative methods to facilitate writing skills by reducing students' anxiety and engaging them to participate actively in learning and showing them this is a skill which can be learnt.

In spite of this, in L2 (Second Language) writing there is no specific and conclusive theory to introduce a process of learning and teaching as Cumming and Riazi (2000) postulated that the information on how people learn to write English as a second language and how teaching may affect their learning still is so limited. Although L2 composition research came along in the 1980s forward, but its progress until the present trace back to the processes in first language composition

research and theories (Ferris and Hedgcock, 2005). So, in order to find out the advances in L2 theory, looking at L1 (first Language) researches seems indispensable.

Primarily, there have been two main approaches to teach writing in the classes. From the early 20th century into the 1960s, a well-known model in composition instruction has been brought in to language learning labeled as “traditional paradigm” or “product approach”. According to this approach, L1 speakers have to be acquainted with “reading and analysis of literature” in which they have to read novels and essays or poetry and then analyze them in written compositions (p. 4). In this approach, students were given formulas and rules to follow based on their teachers’ models and also the assignments would be evaluated by the teachers (Ferris and Hedgcock, 2005). Ferris and Hedgcock add:

...the traditional paradigm reflected a perspective in which school-based essays and themes were viewed as static representations of students’ learning and content knowledge. Therefore, in product-oriented writing classrooms, little if any effort was dedicated to the strategies and other cognitive operations involved in putting pen to paper (or fingers to the keyboard) and drafting a coherent, meaningful piece of connected discourse (p 5).

Other approaches which were used broadly in 1960s forward were “process approaches” where the writers were viewed as “creators of original ideas”. These approaches emphasize that written discourse is a tool for conveying human’s thoughts as well as a method for solving problems, uncovering and expressing ideas (Ferris and Hedgcock, 2005, p. 5). Faigley (1986) divides process writing proponents into two groups: expressivists and cognitivists. Based on expressivists’ point of view, writing is viewed as a personalized task which should promote self-

discovery. In this approach, journal writing has been introduced as one of the methods in which students without having limitation in reflecting their thoughts on the paper can write about their interesting topics (Ferris and Hedgcock, 2005).

Dialogue journal writing in the prevailing teaching and learning context has the potential in providing a non-threatening context for learning in which students can communicate with their teacher or other students in the class. Wang (1998) defines dialogue journal as “a daily written communication between two persons.” (p. 3). In the classroom setting, these persons can be teacher-students or student-student whom they are not assigned a topic or topics to write about, but they can write about their favorite topics and concerns. The outputs are not graded or corrected directly, instead the teacher will provide feedback to the students and correct the mistakes indirectly. This interaction provides communicative context for English as a Second Language (ESL) learning as the purpose of dialogue journal writing is not focusing on forms, but communication (Wang, 1998).

By providing meaningful context for L2 learners, dialogue journal writing as mentioned by Kim (2005) encourages social interaction, where language and literacy will be developed. He also adds:

....interaction occurs in a conscious and constructive way as language learners and teachers are engaged in the meaning-making process through the practice of reflection on their experience, knowledge, and learning/living contexts (p. 2).

Ulusoglu-Darn (2008) reports the advantages of using dialogue journal in the classroom as: a) providing opportunity for learners to express their ideas and

feelings directly to the teacher, b) providing meaningful context for both teachers and learners to use writing as a tool for communication, c) decreasing the “red pen correction” stress which has had negative effect on writing, d) and finally, providing a clear data for the teachers to observe their students’ improvement in writing.

Garlikov (2000) emphasized that writing is easier and more manageable for the students when they write about their favorite topics, particularly when they receive real responses from their counterparts which make their efforts meaningful and worthwhile. Weissberg (1998) observed that dialogue journal aided students in mentoring and developing their own style meanwhile they were more motivated in writing as they were not graded or directly corrected.

Regarded as a method in reflecting learner-centered pedagogy with a sociocultural notion, dialogue journal writing as stated by Payton and Staton (1991) provides continuous reading and writing interaction. In this method, students can use writing as a “communicative form” while at the same time teachers can be familiar with their students’ concerns and needs.

Along with some other advantages in using dialogue journals in students’ language learning, some previous researchers claimed that this technique can assist students in improving writing skills (Song, 1997; Peyton, et al. , 1991; Peyton, 1990; Spack and Sadow,1983), learning new vocabulary and idiomatic expressions as well as improving their self-confidence (Baskin, 1994). It also helps them in syntactic development (Weissberg, 1998), language acquisitions, increasing their self-esteem

(Moulton & Holmes, 1994), and improving their spelling, grammar, capitalization and punctuation (Koch, 2005).

Besides that, one of the most notable benefits of using dialogue journal writing in classes is providing low anxiety conditions for learners (Holmes and Moulton, 1995). According to previous researches in language learning, anxiety has the essential role in language learning as there is negative relationship between anxiety and learners' performance (Atay and Kurt, 2006).

In the past, using pen and paper was the primary mode of journal writing. Nevertheless, current advances in computer technology have brought breakthrough and undeniable opportunities in language learning which has affected radically the way English is taught and learnt. Halliday (1990) stressed the role of computer-based media as a new demand in language learning which generates changes accordingly. Cyboron (as cited in King and LaRocco, 2006) verified that using technology can provide easier reflective journaling. Computer-mediated communication (CMC) provides authentic material in the second language which is a viable and potentially helpful alternative in the classroom. Among the electronic tools available, electronic mail (e-mail) is becoming ubiquitous in present world and recognized as one of the most successful computer applications (Whittaker and Sidner, 2000). With the advent of e-mail and its mass use by the general public in the 1990s (Baron, 2001), sending and receiving the mails accomplished so fast and it brought an interest for educators and teachers to use this medium in their classes (Biasenbach-Lucas, 2001).

A great body of researches has been conducted on the effectiveness use of e-mail and recognized it as a suitable pedagogical tool in teaching and learning. The motives for such researches stem from the importance of e-mail in the contemporary world culture. Electronic communication due to its potential in moving in time and space supersedes the limitations of face to face delivery and has been considered as a trustable source of information especially for students (Krajka, 2002). Likewise, Belisle (1996) believed that students, by using electronic network, including e-mail, as well as extending their collaboration, have the chance to create, analyze and produce information and ideas more readily and efficiently. Besides, by accessing the world around them, students can easily contact each other and increase their social relationship. As a result, students' confidence will be improved while they are free from the limitations of traditional writing tools; pen and paper, which often create problems in their writing processes. Belisle further asserted that as the role of the teacher has been changed to a consulter who guides students in their learning, so the learning environment from a traditional passive-listening process has been changed to the world of stimulation and investigation.

Warschauer (1995) introduced e-mail as an instructional tool by pointing out several advantages: (a) e-mail provides a real and natural condition for communication, (b) it motivates students in independent writing, and (c) it also helps teachers to enhance their experience and information. Apart from this, some research-based studies showed that e-mail developed students' intercultural and cross-cultural learning (O'Dowd, 2003; Liaw and Johnson, 2001), increased students' motivation and responsibility in learning the language (Sabieh, 2002).